

Script: Frank R. Johnson

Mother's Day, 2026  
"What One Mother Might Tell Us"  
Exodus 2:1-10

Take a first look.

I. By the time my mother met my father, she was considered on the border of "Old Maid" status. She was twenty-nine years old at the time of her marriage to my dad, who was thirty-nine at the time. In 1951, that was getting up there. Mom had never to my knowledge had a serious brush with marriage before my father-to-be came along. I have heard her recount how she wondered if perhaps God had called her to a life as a single, unmarried person by that time. I like to think that God was just preserving her and my dad for just the right moment. As we have explored recently, *chronos* had to keep ticking by for *kairos* to come at just the opportune time. The clock kept ticking while God prepared for his timing for their lives. My mother had made it through college, seminary, and vocational employment in various churches, leading educational ministries. My father had lived through work in the oil fields, survived World War II [that would be *Two*, not *Eleven*, for those who have been watching Congressional gaffs lately!]<sup>1</sup> while he was stationed in New Guinea and Australia, and then went back to university as an older, "non-traditional" student. My parents met at church: dad was an older man trying to figure out how to grow in his faith and serve God, and mom was a Minister of Education. Then, after their marriage in 1951, my brother was born on October 25, 1952, while my father completed his university degree. I came along almost three years later while my parents were living in Fort Worth, Texas, either during or just after my father completed a Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. By that time, my father was almost forty-five years of age and my mother was thirty-five. I might have been called, as I swear I have heard my mother call me, "a happy little accident"—at least from the human perspective. After years of therapy, I now believe that my coming along was not all that happy for them. 😊

II. My mother had a unique story to tell, but come to think of it, so does every other mother! Our Biblical story for today focuses on a mother that was never named in Scripture. Yet, she bore and partly reared a son that has become one of the most easily recognized of all Biblical characters. That man's name is Moses, and this message will imagine his mother offering us some insight into what it means to be a parent. So, let's see how Moses' mother comes into focus and what she can teach us.

Take a closer look at Exodus 2:1-10.

**I. There is never a perfect time to be a parent.** The circumstances of Moses' parents and of his birth were bad on all accounts. It was illegal to have a son in a Hebrew family! [See Exodus 1:22.] Well, you could give birth to one, but you couldn't keep him. Government-mandated infanticide was the law of the land for every boy born into the family line of Israel. Girl, fine. Boy, throw him into the Nile River!

Insight: **We must trust God in every generation to help us as parents.**

<sup>1</sup> The immigrant representative from Minnesota, Ilhan Imar, recently (April 2026) called it World War Eleven in a public speech.

I—I know people who decided not to have children because of their perspective toward world affairs. They have even stated to me, “We did not want to bring children into this corrupt world.” When I reflect on that statement, I wonder to myself, *When has this world not been corrupt?* Yet, those fine people have also told me as they got older, that they feel they missed out on much that enriches our challenging sojourn on earth: the value of children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. Yes, God has not called everyone to marriage and family. For those He has called to a single life, He supplies their family through the Church. But for most people, God’s plan will involve heterosexual, monogamous marriage and probably children. In other words, for most of us, the plan for sexual fulfillment is to get married, stay married, and like it, to the glory of God and probably to the bearing of children. I remind you that the Genesis account of the first couple lays down the pattern: “For this reason, a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Now, that is interpreted metaphorically in the sexual union (see 1 Corinthians 6:15-17), but it is fulfilled biologically in the conception of a child: the *two* (sperm from the man and egg from the woman) become *one flesh* at that miraculous moment of conception when a completely new human person comes into existence, having, as we now know, his/her own DNA.

Having a child is an act of faith. We have no way of knowing whether both the mother and the father will live to rear that child; but we know that God has purposes that are redemptive and loving—how can we not believe this as we look at the cross of Christ? My grandfather Franklin, after whom I am named, passed when my own dad was only about seven years of age. I suspect that made it hard on his mother, who did not remarry, to rear my dad as a single mother. It doubtless added a challenge to my father as he tried to figure out what being a father meant when his life was more than halfway over at the time he became one himself. Yet, his mother instilled a reverence for the Bible that prepared the way for the Christian witness that led him to faith, then God led him to my mother, and through them helped both my brother and me come to vital, personal faith in Jesus Christ. Parenting is an act of faith.

**II. We must do what we can to protect and provide for our children.** Moses’ mother didn’t have much to work with—a “basket made of bulrushes and daubed . . . with bitumen and pitch” (Exodus 2:3, ESV). But she used it to try to protect her son from death in the Nile: perhaps you could say she was obeying the technical nature of the law (“cast them into the Nile”) while also trying to keep him alive.

Insight: **God only calls us to do what we can with what we have as parents.**

I—We have been watching a series on Britbox called *Death in Paradise*. In one episode, one of the recently married police officers discovers his wife is pregnant. He is elated, but also terrified. He tells his fellow-officer that he does not feel ready for such a task. He has not even made sergeant yet. How can he provide what his family needs? I would add, who as a parent feels fully “ready” to care for and rear a unique, new human being? After the officer said this, his fellow-officer, a rather spunky woman, who is a little goofy but insightful, replies (I paraphrase), “But you have everything you need! You love your wife and you will love your child!” At the end of the episode, he gets a call from his wife while he and his fellow officers are together after they catch the killer. He becomes very sober-faced, and the team asks him what is wrong. “That was my wife,” he answers. Everyone braces for bad news. Then he says, “Twins. We are having twins!” Everyone erupts in joy. The Detective Inspector offers a toast: “To never sleeping through the night again!”

I remind us, God gives us everything we need to do everything He has called us to do. Our job is to bloom where He has planted us, and if this involves being a parent, to impart to our children whatever good things God allows us to impart to them and then trust Him for whatever else they need.

**III. We must release our children into God's hands and trust Him to use others to do what we cannot do.** Moses' mother had to release him into the basket in the river. She had to endure his "adoption" by the daughter of Pharaoh and his ultimate upbringing in the palace. But she still sent Moses' older sister to keep watch over him. And then, she faithfully nursed and reared him as long and as best as she could, knowing that it would not be through his whole childhood. And her faithfulness to do all she could do made all the difference in what happened next.

Insight: **Parents must trust God's good purposes for children, even as they gradually release them into His world.**

I—"Gradualism" might best describe the right parental approach. I like to remind parents about what I have discovered over a longish life. Time moves by quickly. What I often say at the birth of a child is, "Today the diapers, tomorrow the car keys." If I really wanted to get carried away with this, I would add, "... and the next day, your little child has grandchildren." Now I realize that it doesn't move quite this quickly, but I want to encourage parents to make the best of their present opportunity, because it will change soon enough. About the time you figure out the sleep-deprived experience of parenting your newborn son, perhaps staying awake with him in shifts, he then sleeps through the night—and you wake up in a cold sweat wondering why it is so dang quiet in the house? You rush in to see if everything is OK, and usually you find the child snoozing comfortably—perhaps while covered in poo, as it happened to my wife and me once. Then, he learns how to walk, and the rules completely change. The house must be made "toddler-proof" (there is an entire industry for gadgets and devices for this). Soon, if you choose to send him to school, he turns away from you and walks confidently toward the bus or the schoolhouse door, and you realize that you have just lost something that will never be recovered with your son. Then comes the first crush—and you are tempted to call Vinnie to take care of that creepy little girl who is trying to steal your little boy's affection! And then, "Can I borrow the family car for the evening?" And Prom night. And off to college or trade school, and you again realize that something has inexorably changed. Then, "Mom, Dad, I want you to meet Sally. We want to get married!" [Then, you definitely call Vinnie!]

The call of gradualism is to teach toward those change-points, to anticipate your "kairos" as a parent, your timely opportunity, and make the very best of every season while you can. Moses' mother had to let him go, and we must learn to do so, also, little by little, until that child is ready to live a responsible (and hopefully godly) adult life.

**IV. Our influence with our children may have a greater impact than we think.** Could Moses' mother have imagined what would happen next? She was hired by the daughter of Pharaoh to nurse and rear her own son! We might ask, "Who taught Moses to recognize who his true people were?" It must have been his mother. And then, though many years into the future, that little boy became the man that God used to set His people free from slavery and take them to the Promised Land.

Insight: **God has purposes and plans that include us, but which are far beyond us.**

I—When I was sharing the story of Gladys Aylward recently at Ellensburg Christian School, I reminded the students that Gladys was a quite ordinary woman by all

accounts. She grew up in a lower-middle-class family, though she aspired to become an actress. In her wildest dreams as a girl, she never envisioned herself learning the Chinese language and leading people to faith in Jesus Christ in that very far away and foreign land. She got a job as a parlormaid as a young woman in the 1920s, which was about the only job she could get in London at that time. She came to personal faith in Christ almost by accident, from a human point of view, swept up in a crowd going to a Christian meeting in London and separated from her friends. She read about China in some magazines that were handed out at church and youth meetings. She failed to motivate anyone to go there to serve as a missionary until her brother quipped, "If you are so concerned about this, why don't you go yourself!?" She did, and the rest is history. She ended up saving the lives of many children whom she cared for as her own, as she never married and had children of her own. Her witness near the end of her life was this: "My heart is full of praise that one so insignificant, uneducated, and ordinary in every way could be used to His glory and for the blessing of His people in poor persecuted China."<sup>2</sup>

In our story, Moses' mother had one goal in mind: save her little boy from death in the Nile River. God had a much bigger plan. Had she not done what she could with what she had and trusted Him, that Bigger Plan would never have been fulfilled.

Take it home (applications).

I. We must all develop a generational vision. God has plans that involve us but which go far beyond us. How are we using our influence to shape the lives of those who come after us?

II. We must all be faithful to use what God has given us for His glory and the good of those who come after us. This is true whether we become parents or not.

III. We must trust God to do His work in the lives of our children and others with whom we have influence. We have children as an act of faith. But we also live to influence anyone we can by that same faith.

---

<sup>2</sup> Gladys Aylward: *The Little Woman with a Big God*, p. 153.